Maternal Penning to Enhance Survival of Caribou within the Klinse-Za Herd

External: Issued March 13, 2017

This external memo is forwarded to review the status of project-level tasks, funding status, conditions at the Sqwawteem owkun Mat Pen[1], and important action items and dates. Please review the section on important dates.



Figure 1. A scene from the 2014 Klinse-Za maternity pen.

Conditions at the Sqwawteem owkun Mat Pen

Monday March 06, 2016

- Brian, Ryan, Stephen
- Snow is about 4 feet deep at the pen
- Snow has drifted at both ends and the fence needs to be raised
    - North end has snow at least 5 feet high and so we will need to raise the fence about 4 feet

[1] The mat pen area was named in a special naming ceremony conducted in the summer of 2016. Sqwawteem owkun is the Cree name of Max Desjarlais which means "support beam of a door way" (or lintel in English). Max was a hunter for West Moberly First Nations and inspired the phrase "I want to eat caribou before I die". Sadly, he died without having done so after the Nations self-imposed moratorium on hunting caribou. His inspirations and hopes were instrumental to the foundation of the WMFN/SFN-led Klinse-Za caribou recovery program that exists today.

- South end (entrance) has snow about 4.5 feet deep and the section from the door to the tree house will need to be raised a couple of feet

- Snow is drifting inside in quite a few places and will need to be shovelled down (started yesterday)
- The section of fence along the cutblock needs new cloth and we will raise fence a couple of feet
- There is a new breach (10m long) at top corner of the cut block will need to be fixed
- We have some minor fixing to do on the west side and a fair bit of shoveling.
- The section of fence across the creek near the cabin needs repair
- Some snags will need to be felled
- It is not likely that we will be done by Friday but will be close to finishing.

Tuesday March 07, 2016



- Brian, Ryan, Stephen
- We dug out the south end of meadow (door end) and were able to raise the cloth up to a good height, so south end is completed.
- Broken wire and collapse across the creek from the cabin site is also repaired. This section will need shovelling
- We put a new top wire up on the cutblock side and cloth cut and in place. We will hang the cloth today and likely get a start on the north end today.

Wednesday March 08, 2016

- Brian, Ryan, Stephen
- There is a section (10 m) down at the top corner just in from the cutblock that needs to be fixed
- Dug out inside of fence along creek section and about 80% done on hanging cloth along cut block
- Plan to finish hanging cloth and raise north end of the meadow fence tomorrow and will pick up planner strips for securing cloth to inside corners.
- Very cold yesterday with strong wind.

Thursday March 09, 2016

- Brian, Ryan, Stephen
- We got the East side of the pen completed today.
- Doubled up the cloth and raised height about 2 feet on the sections exposed to the cut block winds and sun.
- We decided to add another wire cable about 4 feet off the ground in this same section to prevent the fence from billowing.
- We also dug out and repaired the breach up at the top corner.
- Friday, we will raise the fence about 3 feet on the north end of the meadow as snow drifting has made it easy to see over the fence across the entire open meadow.

Friday March 10, 2016:

- Brian, Stephen



- We are working on the last major fix and that will be wrapped up mid-day on Monday.
- There is still some shoveling to do and all the little stuff.
- With the three of us I think that we will be done on Wednesday.
- The plan is to go up the day before capture and set up the scales and shovel out and drifting around the door etc. and make double sure that all is ready.

Next week

- Flatten helipads
- Flatten caribou processing area
- Groom trails to and from helipad
- Set up tent and stove to replace cabin for the capture days
- Collect and stock fire wood
- Work on scales (wires broken from being frozen at the Kennedy Siding site) Brian to do in Chetwynd
- Set up scales (just before capture day)
- Brian is going to re-stitch a bunch of areas that need it.
- Fall a few snags.

A set back

Unfortunately we had an unavoidable but fairly significant setback in February when minimally four adult caribou were killed in two separate snow avalanches, one just north of the mat pen and one in the Scott East herd area. We cannot confirm the number of animals involved but know for sure there were two collared cows and a male in one incident and a collared cow in the second. As soon as snow conditions are judged safe, we will excavate the carcasses to determine the severity of the impacts.

2017 operational plan

Important dates

- Jan 23rd – order collars (Line) – completed
- Feb 08th – teleconference (internal to Caribou Working Group) – completed
- Feb 22nd – in-person meeting in Chetwynd (internal to Caribou Working Group) – completed
- Feb 23rd – next newsletter/update (Janie/Scott) – completed
- Feb 27th – order food pellets (Janie) – completed
- Mar 06th (week of) – pen maintenance, set up and test weigh scales, transport lichen (Brian and First Nations team) – in progress, near completion
- Mar 13th – last newsletter/update prior to capture (Janie/Scott) – completed
- Mar 13th (week of) – teleconference (full team) – if required
- Mar 17th – population survey, check calf survival (Line, Brian, Scott or Janie)
- Mar 20th – final check on pen, move in camp materials, set up trail cameras, move lichen and feed (Brian and First Nations team)
- Mar 21st – late afternoon safety meeting (full team at the Lakeview Inn and Suites, Chetwynd)
- Mar 22-24th – cow capture, collaring, transport to pen (full team)
- Apr 11th – in-person meeting in Vancouver (internal working group presentation to EC)

Funding and workplan

A workplan and associated budget has been developed for the 2017/2018 penning year. The total project cost is forecasted to be $529,700. All funding proposals have been submitted (to the partners listed below) and we are awaiting responses and final commitments. Many thanks to past, current and future project sponsors and supporters!

- Public -- $150,000
- Government (Federal and Provincial sources) – $140,000
- Industry -- $240,000

The teams:

- Nîkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society
  - West Moberly First Nations (Chief Roland Willson/Tamara Dokkie)
  - Saulteau First Nations (Estelle Lavis/Naomi Owens)
- Caribou Mat Pen Working Group[2]
  - West Moberly First Nations (George Desjarlais/Jason Lee, alt - Jeff Richert)
  - Saulteau First Nations (Naomi Owens/Carmen Marshall)
  - Wildlife Infometrics (Scott McNay/Brian Pate, alt - Line Giguere)
- Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team[3]
  - Little Smokey penning trial (Kirby Smith)
  - Revelstoke penning trial (Rob Serrouya/Kelsey Furk)
  - UNBC (Kathy Parker)
  - FLNRO (Chris Addison/Chis Ritchie/Helen Schwantje)
  - MOE (Dale Seip)
- Support teams – capture specialists, veterinarian team, shepherds, lichen collectors

[2] The Caribou Mat Pen Working Group is a committee appointed by the Nîkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society.
[3] The Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team is an ad hoc committee chosen by the Working Group to obtain technical advice.